(c) if no, the reasons for the willingness to sign the treaty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) India has announced that it is prepared to bring its discussions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT, to successful conclusion so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September, 1999. Government expects that other countries, as included in Article XIV of the CTBT, will adhere to the Treaty without conditions.

(b) and (c) India's stand on the CTBT was based on the assessment that the Treaty did not address our security concerns. The nuclear tests conducted by India in May 1998 have given us the basic capability for assured security. This is the rationale for the voluntary moratorium which fulfills the basic obligation required under the Treaty. This action has been taken only after the imperatives of national security obligations have been fully addressed.

Theft of Passports

560. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Policy have seized 972 blank passports stolen from Ghaziabad Regional Passport Office; and

(b) if so, whether any in depth probe has been made to identify the conniving officials and what precautionary safety measures have been taken in similarly vulnerable offices to avoid recurrences of such situations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) 962 out of a consignment of 1000 blank passport booklets stolen from the Passport Office at Ghaziabad, have been seized by the Delhi Police. The Passport Office at Ghaziabad has also filed a FIR with the Kavi Nagar Police Station.

(b) Apart from policy investigation of the theft, a departmental enquiry has been initiated regarding procedural lapses at the Passport Office and appropriate action will be taken against the officials found responsible. Suitable instructions for the safe keeping and account of blank passport booklets in stock have been emphatically reiterated to all Passport Offices for strict compliance. The importance of vigilance in ensuring that such incidents do not recur has been impressed on them.

Regional Passport Offices

561. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to delink the Regional Passport Offices from the administrative control of the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) in the alternative whether there is any decision to set-up a separate unit to attend to the welfare and administrative matters of the employees of the Regional Passport Offices;

(c) if not, whether Government process to constitute a team to examine the problem being faced by the employees of the Regional Passport Offices; and

(d) if so, the time frame required for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) No, Sir. The existing administrative framework is considered sufficient for this purpose.

(d) Does not arise.

Nuclear Tests

562. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the response of Pakistan, China